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THE BULLETIN OF THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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WOODEN FIGURE OF THE XIV CENTURY

Early Japanese Buddhist sculpture of prime importance cannot be acquired in Europe or America except at rare intervals. It is even more difficult to secure in Japan. Therefore, the fine example, which has been recently installed in Gallery XIV, and is reproduced herewith, has been long sought for, and is a highly desired acquisition to the Oriental Collection.

It is a small figure* of a Bodhisattva standing with knees slightly bent, leaning forward from the hips and holding in outstretched hands a lotus dais on which the soul of the faithful one is received in Paradise. The graceful little figure is dressed in a full skirt, draped in the back just above the knees. Over this is a double tunic, which hangs in folds and plaits, and at the waist it is held by a sash, tied in a double bow-knot half way down the front, terminating in flaring ends. Over the left shoulder is a scarf which crosses the breast to the right side and hangs in loose folds to the waist line, crossing the back, thence to the left shoulder where the end is tucked under and falls with cascade effect at the side. Both ends of the shoulder scarf are detached pieces, carved separately and nailed to the figure. This interesting bit of technique is repeated in front where the ends of the sash (which is supposed to hold the tunic at the waist) are arranged in a bow-knot. They are independent parts of the statue proper, and when used in this way produce a full round or undercut effect, which adds to the realism of the whole.

On the head of the statue there was originally a metal crown, around the arms were ornamental metal bands, and on the neck, a necklace of numerous pendants. These embellishments are now lost. The only remaining evidence are the holes made by the nails which held the ornaments in place. Other nails still hold in place, at points where the dress is draped, tiny bits of wire, all that remains of tassel-like ornaments originally used to enhance further the naturalistic effect. No parts are lost, however, which would lessen its value as an important example

* 22 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high. Base 4 inches high.

of sculpture for present day consideration and enjoyment, but on the contrary, the little figure appearing thus stripped of ornament, more convincingly reveals itself as a creation of artistic merit.

Both forearms are later additions to the figure, as well as the little detached pedestal which the deity carries in his hands. They seem to be the only new parts which have been added since the statue was made, over eight hundred years ago.

The hair is dressed with a high chignon, and around the head is a gold band over and around which wavy strands of hair are drawn.

The entire head was covered with *jesso*, and probably colored, slight traces of the *jesso* still being visible. With the exception of the head, the entire figure was covered with a coating of brownish-black lacquer, over which pure gold leaf was laid. Most of the original lacquered surface is still intact, but the thin layer of gold leaf, with which it was covered, is largely worn off. In its original state, bedecked with a beautifully pierced bronze crown, and other pierced bronze ornaments, together with wired colored beads sparkling here and there, and the body of the figure completely covered with gold leaf, it must have shone with glory and power.

Gold predominated in Buddhist art at this time (1300 A. D.). It was contended that yellow light permeated the regions of Amida,—and Amida worship prevailed throughout the land. Its popularity and intensity were such that it became a potent factor in art, as well as in religion. The universal worship of this merciful deity, Amida, tempered the sculptor's work to such a degree that the marked characteristics of the time are tenderness and pious meekness, refinement, grace, femininity, and delicacy. Such were the attributes of the deity. Our figure in its appealing poise is ideally human and tender, with a softened feminine aspect markedly different from the strict and masculine discipline practiced in earlier periods. It reflects a period of religious fervor, based on love and compassion and meditative training, which by thought and act beget spiritual and sympathetic accord with mankind and nature, and finally *Nirvana*, the realm of spiritual communion,—the Buddhist's heaven.

The pronounced feminine aspect, however, has not become too human, thus destroying the religious idea; softened lines have

not become too weak, and we have a fourteenth century figure, delicate and lovely, appealing to our finer senses, and thoroughly typical of its time. It presents to us a phase of Japanese Buddhist art which may be said to have run its last long race and won.

Our figure's charm, however, is its final undoing, for a reaction set in in the succeeding period against this universal expression of refined delicacy and tenderness. Extraordinary vigor of line took its place, but no tempering refinement. Pure religious incentive had ceased to prevail, and hero worship took its place, thus setting up a demand for individualism in contrast to previous religious zeal. At no time since has there been more than a temporary regaining of high sculptural power by Japanese artists. We are fortunate in securing this typical example of fourteenth century Buddhist sculpture, which may be said to herald the decline of sculptural art in Japan, but which, in this case, upholds a tradition of excellence and power not yet wholly lost.

In this connection this figure may have been known to some of the readers of the *Bulletin* as a much earlier example of Japanese sculpture, but we are placing it in the early Kamakura Period, where we believe it most probably belongs. This would make the statue not older than eight hundred years,—a goodly time, when considering the frail figure, and the destructibility of the material from which it is made. The wood is exceedingly light; the entire statue including the pedestal weighs less than four pounds. It may be *hinoki*, a light fragrant wood resembling our cypress in general appearance, but more like our cedar in quality.

We are indebted to Mr. Ralph King for the addition to the oriental section of the Museum of this charming and important example of Japanese sculpture of the Kamakura Period (1200-1400 A. D.).

J. A. M.

THE MUSEUM LACE COLLECTION

In 1914 J. H. Wade presented to the Museum the Thomas Wilson collection of laces which had been brought together for exhibition at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. This collection was assembled to show the development of lace from its infancy through the decadent machine lace of the nineteenth century.